

Message Text

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S E C R E T CARACAS 1799

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E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: OVIP (KISSINGER, HENRY A.)

SUBJECT: SECRETARY'S VISIT - CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ

1. SUMMARY: THE PRESIDENT OF VENEZUELA IS NOTED FOR HIS GREAT ENERGY AND PASSIONATE COMMITMENT TO THE JOB. HE DRIVES HIMSELF AND HIS GOVERNMENT HARD. PEREZ MAKES ALL THE IMPORTANT DECISIONS AND BROOKS NO OPPOSITION WITH THE GOV. A RASH IMPATIENCE TO GET ON WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS COUNTRY SOMETIMES LEADS HIM INTO DIFFICULTY. DESPITE THE CAUDILLO STYLE, HE WILL LISTEN TO PEOPLE WITH CLEAR CONCEPTUAL APPROACHES TO THE PROBLEMS THAT ENGAGE HIM. THE PRESIDENT HAS EDUCATED HIMSELF REASONABLY WELL ON THE KEY INTERNATIONAL ISSUES AND DISPLAYS CONSIDERABLE INTEREST IN THEM. HIS ATTITUDE TOWARD THE U.S. IS AMBIGUOUS BUT HE WANTS GOOD RELATIONS. AS A HOST TO DIGNITARIES PEREZ IS PERCEPTIVE, SERIOUS, COURTEOUS AND CONSIDERATE. END SUMMARY.

2. THE SECRETARY'S MEETINGS WITH PEREZ WILL BE THE CENTER-PIECE OF THE VISIT. THIS MESSAGE OFFERS A FEW PERSONAL IMPRESSIONS OF PEREZ I HAVE GATHERED DURING OUR CONTACTS OVER THE LAST NINE MONTHS AND MAY ADD SOME USEFUL POINTS TO THE EXTENSIVE BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION NO DOUBT ALREADY PREPARED.

3. THE PRESIDENT'S MOST IMPRESSIVE QUALITY, AND THE ONE HE TAKES THE MOST PRIDE IN, IS HIS ENORMOUS ENERGY. HE SLEEPS ONLY FOUR OF FIVE HOURS A NIGHT; GETS UP AT DAWN TO EXERCISE IN HIS GYMNASIUM; WORKS A 12-14 HOUR DAY ALMOST EVERY DAY; TAKES NO VACATIONS AND TRAVELS FURIOUSLY ABOUT THE COUNTRY INSPECTING PROJECTS AND

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EXHORTING THE LOCAL OFFICIALDOM. THE TOP LEVEL FUNCTIONARIES OF

HIS GOVERNMENT WORK WITH HIM AT THIS SAME FEREISH PACE. AS PLANNING MINISTER GUMERSINDO RODRIGUEZ SAYS, THEY HAVE TO BE "ROMANTICS" TO TAKE THE PUNISHMENT.

4. ANOTHER STRONG POINT IS A MINUTELY DETAILED KNOWLEDGE OF THE COUNTRY, ITS GEOGRAPHY, PEOPLE AND LOCAL PROBLEMS. MUCH OF PEREZ'S POLITICAL STRENGTH DERIVES FROM THIS CLOSE FAMILIARITY WITH EVERYTHING VENEZUELAN. AS A POLITICIAN HE IS AT HIS MOST EFFECTIVE IN INFORMAL CROWD SITUATIONS, WRINGING HANDS, KISSING BAIES AND THE LIKE. AS AN ORATOR, I WOULD RATE HIM TOWARD THE MIDDLE OF THE LATIN AMERICAN SCALE--VIGOROUS BUT NOT OVERLY ELOQUENT OR POLISHED.

5. AS PRESIDENT, PEREZ IS A HARD-DRIVING ADMINISTRATOR WHO PERSONALLY TACKLES THE PROBLEMS, BIG AND SMALL. HE MAKES VIRTUALLY ALL THE DECISIONS, GIVES ORDERS THAT HE EXPECTS TO BE OBEYED AND HAS MOF OF HIS ASSOCIATES THOROUGHLY COWED. HIS ADMINISTRATION, DYNAMIC AND MODERN AS IT MAY BE IN A NUMBER OF RESPECTS, REFLECTS TRADITIONAL LATIN AMERICAN CAUDILLISMO IN ITS BASIC OPERATIONS.

6. THIS QUALITY ALLOWS PEREZ TO PROJECT HIS STRENGTHS--VIGOR AND COMMITMENT--AND HIS WEAKNESSES. THE LATTER CENTER AROUND WHAT HIS MINSTERS PRIVATELY DESCRIBE AS AN EXCESS OF "PASSION." THE PRESIDENT IS A MAN IN A HURRY, IMPATIENT TO BUILD VENEZUELA OVERNIGHT INTO A MODERN, DEVELOPED NATION. THE RESULT IS AT TIMES A DAMAGING IMPULSIVENESS, AND PURE RAGE WHEN HE FEELS THWARTED OR DECEIVED. LATELY, AS HIS MASSIVE POPULARITY HAS BEGUN TO ERODE, HE SEEMS TO ME TO BE EXERCISING MORE CAUTION-- LOWERING THE TONE SOMEWHAT AND THINKING THROUGH BETTER IN ADVANCE WHAT HE IS GOING TO SAY OR DO. BUT THIS MAY BE NOTHING MORE THAN TEMPORARY RESPITE.

7. THE COMMANDING PERSONALITY AND WELL-DEVELOPED EGO DO NOT MEAN THAT PEREZ IS IMMUNE TO INFLUENCE. HE IS LARGELY SELF-EDUCATED AND OBVIOUSLY HAS SPECIAL RESPECT FOR PEOPLE WHO SEEM TO HAVE WELL-DEVELOPED AND SYSTEMATIC CONCEPTUAL APPROACHES TO THE PROBLEMS THAT ENGAGE HIM. MANUEL PEREZ GUERRERO AND GUMERSINDO RODRIGUEZ ARE NOTABLE EXAMPLES. THE PRESIDENT CAN BE A GOOD LISTENER WHEN HIS ATTENTION IS

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CAUGHT. BUT ONCE HE IS SOLD ON AN IDEA OR A CONCEPT HE IS A HARD MAN TO MOVE. (THE PRESIDENT IS ALSO AT TIMES PERHAPS INFLUENCED BY LESS SERIOUS PEOPLE WHO SHARE HIS RATHER INTENSE AND MUCH-GOSSIPED-ABOUT LEISURE TIME.)

8. AS WE HAVE NOTED FREQUENTLY, PEREZ VIEWS THE WORLD IN TERMS OF VENEZUELA'S PRINCIPAL FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES: DEFENSE OF THE OIL PRICE PRICE, LATIN AMERICAN AND THIRD WOLRD

SOLIDARITY. HE IS KEENLY INTERESTED IN THE MAJOR INTERNATIONAL ISSUES AND APPEARS TO HAVE DONE A GOOD DEAL OF READING ABOUT THEM. HIS ATTITUDES TOWARD THE UNITED STATES ARE SOMEWHAT AMBIGUOUS. UNLIKE HIS MENTOR BETANCOURT, PEREZ DOES NOT KNOW OUR COUNTRY WELL AND HAS A DIFFICULT TIME GRASPING THE COMPLEXITIES OF THE CONGRESSIONAL INTERACTION WITH THE EXECUTIVE IN PARTICULAR. THE PRESIDENT REMEMBERS ALL TOO WELL OUR COZY RELATIONS WITH PEREZ JIMENEZ IN THE 50'S; BUT HE ALSO REMEMBERS THE STRONG U.S. SUPPORT THE BETANCOURT ADMINISTRATION ENJOYED IN THE EARLY 60'S WHEN IT WAS FIGHTING FOR ITS LIFE. HE STILL SEES THE USG AS THE "UMBRELLA" FOR THE FREE WORLD AND WORRIES ABOUT OUR PURPORTED LOSS OF RESOLVE. IN TERMS OF LATIN AMERICA HE DOUBTS THAT WE HAVE MUCH OF A POLICY OR MUCH REAL INTEREST. BUT OVERALL, PEREZ IS REASONABLY REALISTIC ABOUT THE U.S. AND WANTS GOOD RELATIONS.

9. HIS VIEWS ON PARTICULAR SUBJECTS INCLUDE:

-- THE MULTINATIONALS: "NEITHER GOOD NOR BAD, JUST COMPUTERS";

-- THE MEDIA: SENSATIONALISM AND "IRRESPONSIBLE" REVELATIONS ARE A "MENACE" TO DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT;

-- DEMOCRACY: CHANGES TO BRING MORE ORDER AND SOCIAL DISCIPLINE ARE NECESSARY IF DEMOCRACY IS TO SURVIVE;

-- THE USG: A SIEVE (THE GOV IS ALMOST AS BAD, ALTHOUGH HE DOES NOT ADMIT IT).

10. DESPITE HIS REPUTATION FOR BLUNTNESS, PEREZ IS THE SOUL OF COURTESY AND CONSIDERATION WITH FOREIGN DIGNITARIES. HE MAINTAINS HIS DIGNITY WITHOUT STIFFNESS AND TALKS FREELY BUT SERIOUSLY. HIS
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TENDENCY IS TO FOCUS ON SUBSTANCE AND AVOID SMALL TALK.
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